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✓ Claim 88. The absorbent article of Claim 86, wherein the storage/redistribution layer of the first absorbent core component comprises fibrous nonwoven materials and absorbent gelling materials. ✓

✓ Claim 89. The absorbent article of Claim 86, wherein the fibrous nonwoven materials of the storage/redistribution layer are polyester fiber materials, polyethylene fiber materials, polypropylene fiber materials, cotton fiber materials, cellulose fiber materials, chemically stiffened cellulose fiber materials, twisted cellulose fiber materials, curled cellulose fiber materials, eucalyptus fiber materials, or combinations thereof. ✓

REMARKS

By the preliminary amendments presented, the Abstract has been amended in the manner suggested by the Examiner to more clearly characterize the backsheet of the claimed invention as a backsheet having an aperture created by the at least one discontinuity in the backsheet.

Also by the preliminary amendments presented, Figures 3 on page 2/12 has been amended to delete therefrom element 42 (a back flap), and to provide in red ink the drawing line changes to the absorbent core center component of this originally filed drawing.

Also by the preliminary amendments presented, drawing pages 3/12 (Figure 5), 5/12 (Figure 7), and 8/12 (Figure 10) are submitted to provide the corrected changes to these originally filed drawings.

Also by the preliminary amendments presented, original drawing pages 10/12 (Figure 14) and 11/12 (Figure 15) have been amended to delete therefrom the rollers positioned before rollers 91 and 92, and the rollers positioned between the nip 93 and the cut assembly 95.

Also by the preliminary amendments presented, Claims 14, has been canceled without prejudice.

Also by the preliminary amendments presented, Claim 11 has been amended to more specifically characterize the first absorbent core component of the claimed absorbent article as being a first absorbent core component having specifically defined absorbent layers that include an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer. Support for this amendment is found in Applicants' specification at page 11, lines 20-23.

Also by the preliminary amendments presented, Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 have been amended to more clearly characterize the materials from which the claimed absorbent core components are made, wherein these materials include fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foams, absorbent gelling

materials, or combinations thereof. Support for these amendments is found in Applicants' specification at page 17, lines 14-33.

Also by the preliminary amendments presented, Claims 82-84 have been added to more specifically characterize the materials of the acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers of the claimed first absorbent core component. Support for these amendments is found in Applicants' specification at page 17, lines 14-33, and page 19, lines 9-37.

Also by the preliminary amendments presented, Claims 85-89 have been added to define a storage/redistribution layer of the claimed first absorbent core component, and the materials from which this layer is made. Support for these amendments is found in Applicants' specification at page 11, lines 20-23, page 17, lines 14-33, and page 19, lines 9-37.

Upon entry of the preliminary amendments presented, Claims 11-12, 17, 20, 32-33, 37-39, and 43-44 remain in this continuation prosecution application. Claims 82-89 are new in this application. No additional claims fee is due.

Invention Synopsis

The present invention is directed to an absorbent article suitable for absorbing and retaining aqueous body fluids. The disclosed absorbent article comprises a topsheet, an absorbent core, and a backsheet. The absorbent core of the claimed absorbent article comprises multiple absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component provides fluid acquisition and fluid acquisition/distribution performance, and the second and third absorbent core components provide fluid acquisition, fluid acquisition/distribution, and fluid storage/redistribution performance. The absorbent core components include 1) a multi-layered first absorbent core component having fluid acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers made from materials such as fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, or combinations thereof; 2) a removable second absorbent core component that is positioned in a first waist region of the backsheet, and that has removable absorbent members made from materials such as fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, absorbent gelling materials, or combinations thereof; and 3) a removable third absorbent core component that is positioned in a second waist region of the backsheet, and that has removable absorbent members made from materials such as fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, absorbent gelling materials, or combinations thereof.

It has been found that an absorbent article can be manufactured to contain a combination of defined absorbent components to provide for improved reuse of the absorbent article. The absorbent components include removable absorbent materials that

can be removed from the absorbent article without the need to remove the article from the wearer. It has been found that these removable absorbent materials can also be effectively replaced with identical absorbent materials without removing the article from the wearer.

Formal Matters

a) Abstract

The Abstract of the present continuation prosecution application has been amended in the manner suggested by the Examiner to recite at line 6, the phrase "by the at least one discontinuity" rather than the phrase "by at least one discontinuity."

b) Specification

The disclosure of the parent application had been objected to in a previous Office Action, Paper No. 4, on page 2, lines 14-16 for alleged inconsistencies in Figures 3-4 and 14-15 of Applicants' drawings. The Examiner had requested identification of the roller vertically between the nip 93 and the cut assembly 95 in Figures 14-15. Also, the Examiner contended that identical numerals are being used to identify different structures in Figures 3-4.

As to Figures 14-15, Applicants submit that drawing Figures 14-15 have been amended to delete therefrom the non-essential rollers that are positioned before rollers 91 and 92 and those positioned between the nip 93 and the cut assembly 95, thus obviating this objection as it would apply to Figures 14-15 of the present continuation prosecution application.

As to Figures 3-4, Applicants submit that Figure 3 has been amended to delete therefrom the identification of the flap portion (element 42) of a pocket formed in Applicants' claimed backsheet component, thus obviating this objection as it would apply to Figure 3 of the present continuation prosecution application. Applicants respectfully traverse the objection to Figure 4 as it relates to element 42, and submit that element 42 of Figure 4 is an identical view of element 42 as shown in approved drawing Figure 2.

The disclosure of the parent application had also been objected to under 35 U.S.C. 132 for alleged new matter in Claims 12, 14, 17, 20, and 37-38. Responsive to this objection Claims 14, has been canceled without prejudice, thus obviating this objection as it would apply to this claim of the present continuation prosecution application. Also responsive to this objection, Claims 12, 17, 20, and 37-38 of the present continuation prosecution application have been amended to delete therefrom the claimed limitations of the absorbent core components comprising a mixture of absorbent core materials, thus obviating this objection as it would apply to these claims of the present continuation prosecution application.

In light of the clarifying amendments to Figures 3 and 14-15, and Claims 12, 14, 17, 20, and 37-38, and in light of the foregoing observations, Applicants respectfully submit that the drawings and claims as they now stand are correct. These objections as they would apply to these drawings and claims of the present continuation prosecution application would, therefore, be improper.

c) Drawings

The drawings of the parent application had been approved in part. Specifically, the Examiner approved amended drawing Figures 1-2 filed April 3, 2000, and objected to drawing Figures 3-5, 7 and 10 as amended in the parent application.

Figures 3 and 4 had been objected to in the parent application for exemplification of expanded and unexpanded views of Applicants' absorbent core center 50 as compared to element 50 as shown in approved drawing Figures 1 and 2. Responsive to this objection, Applicants have amended the informal and formal drawings of originally filed Figure 3 to show in red ink the expanded view drawing changes of element 50 which exemplifies layers of the claimed absorbent core center. Applicants submit that the unexpanded view of element 50 of Figure 4 is an identical view of element 50 in approved drawing Figure 2. This objection of Applicants' drawing Figures 3 and 4 as it would apply to these drawings of the present continuation prosecution application is, therefore, obviated.

Figures 3 and 4 had also been objected to in the parent application for an alleged mislabeling of element 42 in these drawings. The Examiner contends that element 42 of Figures 3-4 are shown as different structures as compared to element 42 of approved drawing Figures 1-2. Applicants have amended Figure 3 to delete therefrom the identification of the flap portion (element 42) of a pocket formed in Applicants' claimed backsheet component, thus obviating this objection as it would apply to Figure 3 of the present continuation prosecution application. Applicants respectfully traverse the objection to Figure 4 as it relates to element 42, and submit that element 42 of Figure 4 is an identical view of element 42 as shown in approved drawing Figure 2.

Figures 5, 7 and 10 had also been objected in the parent application for not identifying in red ink the drawing changes made to the originally filed drawings. Responsive to this objection, Figures 5, 7, and 10 of the present continuation prosecution application are submitted with the identified drawing changes marked in red ink, thus obviating this objection as it would apply to these drawings of the present continuation prosecution application.

In light of the clarifying amendments to Figures 3, 5, 7, and 10, and in light of the foregoing observations, Applicants respectfully submit that the drawings as they now stand

are correct. These objections as they would apply to drawing Figures 3-4, 5, 7, and 10 of the present continuation prosecution application would, therefore, be improper.

d) Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112 (1st paragraph)

Claims 12, 14, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 of the parent application had been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112 (1st paragraph) for reciting that the claimed absorbent core components comprise a mixture of absorbent materials.

Responsive to this rejection, Claims 14, has been canceled without prejudice, thus obviating this rejection as it would apply to this claim of the present continuation prosecution application. Also responsive to this rejection, Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 of the present continuation prosecution application have been amended to delete therefrom the claimed limitations of the absorbent core components comprising a mixture of absorbent core materials, thus obviating this objection as it would apply to these claims of the present continuation prosecution application.

In light of the amendments to Claims 12, 14, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39, Applicants respectfully submit that remaining Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 as they now stand are in complete compliance with the description requirement of 35 USC 112 (1st paragraph). The rejection of Applicants' Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 of the present continuation prosecution application under 35 USC 112 (1st paragraph) would, therefore, be improper.

e) Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112 (2nd paragraph)

Claims 12, 14, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 of the parent application had been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112 (2nd paragraph) as being indefinite for recitation of the terms "comprising" and "consisting" in these claims.

Responsive to this rejection Claims 14, has been canceled without prejudice, thus obviating this rejection as it would apply to this claim of the present continuation prosecution application. Also responsive to this rejection, Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 of the present continuation prosecution application have been amended to delete therefrom the claimed limitations of the absorbent core components comprising absorbent core materials selected from the group consisting of fibrous nonwoven materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, absorbent gelling materials, and mixtures thereof. Accordingly, this rejection as it would apply to these claims of the present continuation prosecution application is obviated.

In light of the amendments to Claims 12, 14, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39, Applicants respectfully submit that remaining Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 as they now stand are in complete compliance with the definiteness requirement of 35 USC 112 (2nd paragraph).

The rejection of Applicants' Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 of the present continuation prosecution application under 35 USC 112 (2nd paragraph) would, therefore, be improper.

Art Rejections

Lewis in view of Schiff and Marcus

Claims 11, 33, and 43-44 of the parent application had been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentably obvious over Lewis (GB 493,819) in view of Schiff (U.S. Patent 833,849) and Marcus (U.S. Patent 2,688,328). The Examiner contended that it would have been obvious to incorporate the defined backsheet, recloseable flap, and fasteners disclosed in Schiff or Marcus into an absorbent article of Lewis, to thereby realize Applicants' invention. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection as it would apply to the amended claims of the present continuation prosecution application.

Lewis discloses an absorbent article such as a baby diaper which provides improved fastening means, and which comprises a crotch region terminating in waistband parts, wherein the waistband parts include a first end having openings and a second end having non-metallic hook-like devices to engage the openings. Lewis further discloses that the absorbent article has a topsheet having an optional slit, a backsheet having an optional slit, and a removable pad that is interposed between the topsheet and backsheet, and that can be made from single or multi-layer materials wherein the multi-layer is preferably formed by superimposing sheets of identical material. Lewis, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising 1) an absorbent core containing a multi-layered first absorbent core component such as an absorbent pad that is disposed in the crotch region and that has specifically defined absorbent layers such as an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer, 2) an absorbent core containing a defined multi-layered first absorbent core component in combination with a removable second absorbent core component, or 3) a backsheet having a recloseable flap securedly positioned over a backsheet discontinuity.

Schiff discloses an absorbent article such as a catamenial garment which provides for the changing of a pad or napkin without the need to remove the garment. The catamenial garment disclosed in Schiff comprises two separate openings, one in the front and one in the rear of the garment; and two recloseable flaps that are securedly positioned over the openings, and that provide for the removal of a pad or napkin. Schiff, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core containing 1) a multi-layered first absorbent core component such as an absorbent pad that is disposed in the crotch region and that has specifically defined absorbent layers such as an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer, or 2) such a multi-layered absorbent core component in combination with a removable second absorbent core component.

Marcus discloses an absorbent article such as a diaper which comprises a removable pad insert; a topsheet; and a backsheet having a discontinuity in the front region, and a recloseable flap that is positioned over the discontinuity providing access to the removable pad. Marcus, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core containing 1) a multi-layered first absorbent core component such as an absorbent pad that is disposed in the crotch region and that has specifically defined absorbent layers such as an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer, or 2) such a multi-layered absorbent core component in combination with a removable second absorbent core component.

Applicants respectfully submit that the combined disclosures of the Lewis, Schiff, and Marcus references, in any combination, fail to teach or suggest the absorbent article of Applicants' Claims 11, 33, and 43-44, as amended. None of these applied references teaches or suggests an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core having a combination of absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having specifically defined absorbent layers is combined with a removable second absorbent core component. First, the Lewis reference teaches an absorbent article which comprises a removable absorbent core component that is disposed in a typical crotch region of an absorbent article, and that can contain single or multi-layers of any suitable absorbent material wherein the multi-layered absorbent material is preferably made by superimposing sheets of identical material. Secondly, the Schiff reference teaches an absorbent article that comprises openings for the removal of a removable absorbent core component that can be defined as a typical removable catamenial pad or napkin. Thirdly, Marcus teaches an absorbent article that comprises a removable absorbent core component that is in contact with a moisture repellent liner, and that is removable through a discontinuity in the front region of Marcus' backsheet. By contrast, Applicants amended Claims 11, 33, and 43-44, are now limited to an absorbent core comprising a combination of a multi-layered first absorbent core component and a removable second absorbent core component, wherein the multi-layered first absorbent core component is disposed in the crotch region and has specifically defined layers such as an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer.

Moreover, Applicants submit that the incorporation of the backsheet of Schiff or Marcus into an absorbent article of Lewis would still be deficient in teaching an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core containing a combination of absorbent core components or an absorbent core component having distinct layers defined by acquisition and acquisition/distribution properties. The combined disclosures of the Lewis, Schiff, and Marcus references, in any combination, would result in an absorbent article containing a removable absorbent core component that can be made from any suitable single or multi-layered construction to provide typical absorbency functions. Applicants' invention, however, is directed to an absorbent article that not only contains two distinct absorbent

core components, but that also contains an absorbent core component that has specific layers which result in a portion of the absorbent core providing specific acquisition and acquisition/distribution characteristics. Therefore, Applicants submit that the teachings of these particular applied references would not obviously lead the skilled artisan to a realization of Applicants' invention as it relates to amended Claims 11, 33, and 43-44.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that these applied references, in any combination, do not render Applicants' amended Claims 11, 33, and 43-44 unpatentably obvious under 35 USC 103. Rejection of these claims over Lewis in view of Schiff and Marcus would, therefore, be improper.

Murphy in view of Lewis, Schiff, and Marcus

Claims 11, 33, and 43-44 of the parent application had been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentably obvious over Murphy (GB 734,994) in view of Lewis (GB 493,819), Schiff (U.S. Patent 833,849), and Marcus (U.S. Patent 2,688,328). The Examiner contended that it would have been obvious to realize Applicants invention as it relates to Claims 11, 33, and 43-44 based on the teachings of the Murphy, Lewis, Schiff, and Marcus references. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection as it would apply to the amended claims of the present continuation prosecution application.

Murphy discloses an absorbent article such as a diaper which comprises detachable fastening means, and a pocket formed between two sheets of materials (e.g., a topsheet and a backsheet) wherein the pocket optionally contains additional absorbent materials including one or more absorbent pads. Murphy further discloses that the indicative topsheet material has an opening that provides access to the pocket for insertion and/or removal of the absorbent material(s). Murphy, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising 1) an absorbent core containing a multi-layered first absorbent core component such as an absorbent pad that is disposed in the crotch region and that has specifically defined absorbent layers such as an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer, 2) an absorbent core containing a defined multi-layered first absorbent core component in combination with a removable second absorbent core component, or 3) a backsheet having two distinct discontinuities formed in the backsheet.

Lewis discloses an absorbent article such as a baby diaper which comprises a topsheet having an optional slit, a backsheet having an optional slit, and a removable pad that can be made of single or multi-layer construction wherein the multi-layer is preferably formed by superimposing sheets of identical material. Lewis, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising 1) an absorbent core containing a defined combination of two absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having distinct acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers is combined with a removable second

absorbent core component, or 2) a backsheet having a recloseable flap securedly positioned over a backsheet discontinuity.

Schiff discloses an absorbent article such as a catamenial garment which comprises two separate openings, one in the front and one in the rear of the garment; and two recloseable flaps that are securedly positioned over the openings, and that provide for the removal of a pad or napkin. Schiff, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core containing a defined combination of two absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having distinct acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers is combined with a removable second absorbent core component.

Marcus discloses an absorbent article such as a diaper which comprises a removable pad insert; a topsheet; and a backsheet having a discontinuity in the front region, and a recloseable flap that is positioned over the discontinuity and that provides access to the removable pad. Marcus, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core containing a defined combination of two absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having distinct acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers is combined with a removable second absorbent core component.

Applicants respectfully submit that the Murphy, Lewis, Schiff, and Marcus references, in any combination, fail to teach or suggest the absorbent article of Applicants' Claims 11, 33, and 43-44, as amended. None of these applied references teaches or suggest an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core having two defined absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component has specifically defined layers such as acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers. The combined teachings of these particularly applied references are directed to absorbent articles which can comprise a combination of any suitable absorbent materials, and access for the removal of one or both of the materials. By contrast, Applicants' Claims 11, 33, and 43-44 are now limited to an absorbent article comprising a combination of specific absorbent materials wherein one has defined layers and the other is removable from the absorbent article. Accordingly, based on the teachings of these particular applied references, alone or in combination, the skilled artisan would not be motivated to make an absorbent article containing Applicants' two defined absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having defined acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers is combined with a removable second absorbent core component.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that these applied references, alone or in combination, do not render Applicants' amended Claims 11, 33, and 43-44 unpatentably obvious under 35 USC 103. Rejection of these claims over Murphy in view of Lewis, Schiff, and Marcus would, therefore, be improper.

Schiff and Marcus or Murphy, Lewis, Schiff, and Marcus, and further in view of Dyer et al.

Claims 12, 14, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39, of the parent application had been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentably obvious over Schiff (U.S. Patent 833,849) and Marcus (U.S. Patent 2,688,328) or Murphy (GB 734,994), Lewis (GB 493,819), Schiff (U.S. Patent 833,849), and Marcus (U.S. Patent 2,688,328), and further in view of Dyer et al. (U.S. Patent 5,387,207). The Examiner contended that it would have been obvious to incorporate the absorbent core disclosed in Dyer et al. into an absorbent article of Lewis or Murphy, to thereby realize Applicants' invention. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection as it would apply to the amended claims of the present continuation prosecution application.

Murphy discloses an absorbent article such as a diaper which comprise detachable fastening means, and a pocket formed between two sheets of materials (e.g., a topsheet and a backsheet) wherein the pocket optionally contains additional absorbent materials including one or more absorbent pads. Murphy further discloses that the indicative topsheet material has an opening that provides access to the pocket for insertion and/or removal of the absorbent material(s). Murphy, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising 1) an absorbent core containing a defined combination of two absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having distinct acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers is combined with a removable second absorbent core component, or 2) a backsheet having two distinct discontinuities formed in the backsheet.

Lewis discloses an absorbent article such as a baby diaper which comprises a topsheet having an optional slit, a backsheet having an optional slit, and a removable pad that can be made of single or multi-layer construction wherein the multi-layer is preferably formed by superimposing sheets of identical material. Lewis, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising 1) an absorbent core containing a defined combination of two absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having distinct acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers is combined with a removable second absorbent core component, or 2) a backsheet having a recloseable flap securedly positioned over a backsheet discontinuity.

Schiff discloses an absorbent article such as a catamenial garment which comprises two separate openings, one in the front and one in the rear of the garment; and two recloseable flaps that are securedly positioned over the openings, and that provide for the removal of a pad or napkin. Schiff, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core containing a defined combination of two absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having distinct acquisition and

acquisition/distribution layers is combined with a removable second absorbent core component.

Marcus discloses an absorbent article such as a diaper which comprises a removable pad insert; a topsheet; and a backsheet having a discontinuity in the front region, and a recloseable flap that is positioned over the discontinuity and that provides access to the removable pad. Marcus, however, fails to disclose an absorbent article comprising an absorbent core containing a defined combination of two absorbent core components wherein a first absorbent core component having distinct acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers is combined with a removable second absorbent core component.

Dyer et al. disclose absorbent polymeric foam materials such as open-celled polymeric foam materials which are suitable for incorporation into absorbent articles including disposable diapers, and which provide fluid storage/redistribution performance. The Dyer et al. reference further discloses absorbent articles comprising a multi-layered absorbent core having a fluid storage/redistribution layer and a fluid handling layer in the form of an acquisition or acquisition/distribution layer, wherein both the storage/redistribution and fluid handling layers are typically positioned in a crotch region of the absorbent article so that the storage/redistribution layer underlies the fluid handling layer. The fluid storage/redistribution layer disclosed in Dyer et al. comprises absorbent polymeric foam materials alone or in combination with one or more absorbent materials such as fibrous nonwoven materials and absorbent gelling materials, whereas the fluid handling layer comprises conventional absorbent materials such as fibrous nonwovens, cellulosic fibers, modified cellulosic fibers, large cell absorbent foams, and absorbent gelling materials. Dyer et al., however, fail to disclose an absorbent article comprising 1) an absorbent core containing a multi-layered absorbent core component that is positioned in the crotch region and that has a specific combination of an acquisition layer and an acquisition/distribution layer, 2) an absorbent core comprising a removable absorbent core component, 3) an absorbent core containing a defined multi-layered first absorbent core component in combination with a removable second absorbent core component, or 4) a backsheet having two distinct discontinuities formed in the backsheet.

Applicants respectfully submit that the Murphy, Lewis, Schiff, Marcus, and Dyer et al. references, in any combination, fail to teach or suggest the absorbent article of Applicants' remaining amended Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39. Although the Dyer et al. reference discloses absorbent core materials made from fibrous nonwoven materials, fibrous wet-laid web materials, open-celled polymeric foam materials, and absorbent gelling agents, this particular applied reference fails to disclose Applicants' now claimed limitation of a first absorbent core component having acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers in combination with a removable second absorbent core component. Furthermore, Applicants

submit that the incorporation of an absorbent core of Dyer et al. into an absorbent article of Lewis or Murphy, or the combined disclosure of either of these applied reference, would not result in Applicants' absorbent core containing an absorbent core component having a specifically defined combination of acquisition and acquisition/distribution layers.

Moreover, Applicants submit that an absorbent core of Dyer et al. comprises either 1) one or more acquisition layers in combination with one or more storage/redistribution layers, or 2) one or more acquisition/distribution layers in combination with one or more storage/redistribution layers. Therefore, the Dyer et al. reference fails to teach or suggest an absorbent core containing an acquisition layer in combination with an acquisition/distribution layer. Furthermore, the Dyer et al. reference fails to recognize that Applicants' now claimed first absorbent core component can be incorporated into an absorbent article with another absorbent material such as a removable absorbent core component to provide improved fluid handling capabilities such as fluid acquisition, acquisition/distribution and storage/redistribution, and not only fluid acquisition and storage/redistribution or fluid acquisition/distribution and storage/redistribution benefits. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the incorporation of Dyer et al.'s absorbent core into an absorbent article of Lewis or Murphy would still be deficient in comprising an absorbent core containing an absorbent core component having an acquisition layer combined with acquisition/distribution layer, and certainly would be deficient in comprising an absorbent core containing Applicants' first absorbent core component in combination with a removable second absorbent core component.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that these applied references, alone or in combination, do not render Applicants' remaining amended Claims 12, 17, 20, 32, and 37-39 unpatentably obvious under 35 USC 103. Rejection of these claims over Schiff and Marcus or Murphy, Lewis, Schiff, and Marcus, and further in view of Dyer et al. would, therefore, be improper.

Conclusions

Applicants have made an earnest effort to place their application in proper form and to distinguish their claimed invention from the applied prior art which had been applied in the final rejection of the parent application. WHEREFORE, entry of the preliminary

amendment, consideration of the remarks made herein, and allowance of Claims 11-12, 17, 20, 32-33, 37-39, 43-44, and 82-89 are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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